

UnitingCare Australia calls for urgent improvements to Support at Home in Senate Inquiry

UnitingCare Australia today appeared before the Senate Inquiry into the Support at Home Program alongside network providers BlueCare and Uniting NSW.ACT, calling on the government to release more home care packages, improve access for vulnerable older Australians, and increase funding to the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP).

"We are here because inequality should never determine who gets care, what care they receive, or how long they have to wait. Right now, it does," said Tamara Thomas, National Director of UnitingCare Australia.

Across the UnitingCare network, providers continue to see older people waiting too long for support, and when it finally arrives, receiving only a fraction of the care they need.

"Growing older should not mean sacrificing your health or quality of life, yet that is the reality facing thousands of older Australians right now.

"Whether it's going days without a shower, missing medical appointments, or cutting back on the most basic supports, this is not delivering on the government's promise of dignity and choice in our aged care system," said Tamara Thomas.

BlueCare Group Executive, Cathy Thomas said the increasing complexity of the system is placing pressure on both older people and the workforce.

"Our staff are being relied upon to explain funding arrangements, navigate reassessments and support hardship applications. Every hour spent helping people navigate this complex system is an hour taken away from providing essential home care," Cathy Thomas said.

Uniting NSW.ACT Director of Seniors Services, Saviour Buhagiar told the Inquiry that a rights-based framework cannot be achieved if access to care is rationed.

"We understand it takes a bold government to future proof home and community care while also picking up the tab for a historically underfunded system where costs have blown out. We are confident this government can act boldly. Frankly it has no choice," Mr Buhagiar said.

While Support at Home has the potential to deliver positive outcomes, UnitingCare Australia said the program requires urgent changes if it is to achieve its intended purpose.

"The UnitingCare network is ready, willing and waiting to support more older Australians to age well at home. Now government must match that commitment by releasing more packages and strengthening support for those with the greatest needs," Tamara Thomas said.

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About UnitingCare Australia

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the Uniting Church's community services network and an agency of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. Through advocacy and by strengthening service provision, UnitingCare Australia gives voice to the Uniting Church's commitment to social justice.

The UnitingCare Network is the largest network of social service providers in Australia, delivering 5.8 million interactions annually across 1,600 service locations in urban, rural, and remote communities, with over 55,000 staff and 17,000 volunteers.

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